

FAMILY ADVOCACY PROGRAM



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Happy Healthy New Year!

Every year when January 1 rolls around, many of us vow that this will be the year we start exercising, go on a diet, quit smoking, etc. And when spring rolls around, many of us are still eating too much, have a pack of cigarettes laying around, and haven't been back to the gym since February. Feeling defeated, we give up on any further attempts to make healthy changes, knowing that January 1 will roll around again.

If you are tired of riding the "Resolution Roller Coaster," there are some things you can do to help you stick to your goals. A new approach may be to make a family resolution. Make this the year that your family works together on developing healthy habits.

With obesity rising at an alarming rate, take some time to look at your family's eating habits. Is dinner a healthy blend of lean protein, vegetables and whole grains or a bucket of fried chicken and a bag of burgers and fries? At work or school, do snacks consist of fresh fruit, nuts or low fat dairy products, or a bag of chips and a candy bar from the nearest vending machine?

After assessing what you are eating, get the family together to discuss a healthier eating plan. There are numerous cookbooks and guides available on nutritious foods and how to prepare them. Involve the children in picking recipes that they would like to try. Depending on your current eating habits, you may want to work in your changes gradually. Suddenly throwing out all the Twinkies and

demanding apples be the only choice may lead to battles, frustration, and ultimately a return to the old ways. Instead, add a salad to dinner. Switch from white bread to whole grain bread. Find lower fat ways to prepare favorite dishes. Even cutting out regular soda and switching to diet soda, or preferably, water, can save numerous calories over the day. Remember, small changes can make a big difference!



Studies have also shown that children who eat dinner with their parents tend to eat healthier diets overall than those who don't. Eating habits developed in childhood tend to last a lifetime, so take advantage of this opportunity to not only eat healthy, but also spend quality time together as a family.

Finally, remember change takes time. Habits don't develop overnight, and they won't go away that fast either. Many agencies on base are available to help you with your new healthy resolutions. If you are looking for more information, call Family Advocacy at 376-3457. Most of all, have a Happy New Year!

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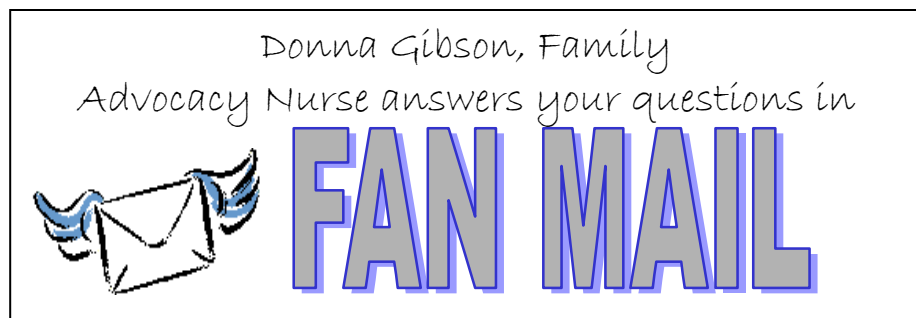
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Dear FAN,

My wife is pregnant and our baby is due in three months. This is our first baby and I've never been around babies before. I really want to be a good dad but I am scared because I don't know what to do when we bring him home from the hospital. I don't even know how to change a diaper!

Green Dad in Gautier

Dear Green,

Congratulations! Having a baby is definitely an exciting time, but it

can also bring some anxiety, especially for first time parents.



Don't feel alone. Many men don't have much experience around babies until they have one of their own. We are excited here at Keesler to offer a program for new fathers just like you called Dads 101. It will teach you the things you need to know when you bring

your baby home, even how to change a diaper! More importantly, it will show you ways to build a lifelong bond with your baby.

Since babies don't come with owner's manuals and troubleshooting guides, Dads 101 should give you a lot of information and a lot of confidence to be a great dad for your baby!. See below to give you more information on this wonderful program and the number to call to register.

If you do have questions, please contact me at 376-3453

Dads 101

A CLASS FOR DADS, BY DADS

A father's involvement in raising his child is a major influence in the child's development. More and more dads are taking on active roles in baby "basics" such as diapering, feeding, and bathing. This casual, relaxed class is designed to give expectant dads an opportunity to practice these skills as well as discuss concerns, issues, fears, or expectations about fatherhood.



**NO FEMALES
OVER TWO FEET
TALL
PERMITTED!!**

Are You Living in a House of Cards?

by Paula Tracy, Family Advocacy Outreach Manager

The signs are abundant—the Gulf coast is rebuilding. And in case you haven't noticed, so are the casinos. Affording us more options for dining, entertainment, shopping, socializing, and employment, casinos are breathing new life into the community. Even so, the bottom line is that casinos exist to make money by luring people in to gamble. For many of us, that poses no problem whatsoever. We can entertain family and friends by taking them out for an evening of blackjack or baccarat—create some pleasant memories. But we know when to stop. More importantly—we can stop.

Some gamblers aren't so fortunate. Overall, 85% of US adults have gambled in their lives—80% of those in the past year. Of these, it is estimated that 1% are pathological gamblers, and another 2-3% problem gamblers (National Council on Problem Gambling). But what does that mean exactly? How can we recognize if it is becoming detrimental to us?

Gambling is regarded as a "hidden addiction", meaning that the signs of a problem often go unnoticed until the gambler is in way over his/her head. Fortunately, screening tools exist to help us identify potential problems before it is too late. Consider the following:

- Have you gambled until your last dollar is gone?
- Have you often gambled longer than you had planned?

- Have you lied about your gambling to friends or family?
- Have you used your income or savings to gamble while letting bills go unpaid?
- Have you made repeated attempts to stop gambling?
- Have you broken the law or considered breaking the law to get money to gamble?
- Have you borrowed money to finance your gambling?
- Have you felt depressed or suicidal because of your gambling losses?
- Have you been remorseful after gambling?
- Have you gambled to try to get money to meet your financial obligations?

If you or someone you know can answer "yes" to any of these questions, consider seeking assistance from a professional specifically trained in gambling issues. It is critical to understand that problem gambling does not represent weak moral character, nor is it "just a bad habit". It is a serious condition that will readily respond to the appropriate treatment. There are certain risk factors that can increase a person's vulnerability, such as family history of addictions, an early "big win", a stressful life event, and preexisting mental health problems, but it can happen at any time to anyone.

Gambling has become problematic when it begins to disrupt the stability or quality of one's life. It can cause the

gambler to lose a great deal more than just money: Health, career, spouse, children, and future security can all be forfeited if gambling cannot be controlled. Some turn to criminal activity such as fraud, extortion, or theft in order to finance a growing compulsion. In addition, of pathological gamblers, 76% have been found to suffer from a major depressive disorder, thereby greatly increasing the risk of suicide (National Council on Problem Gambling).

The families of problem gamblers suffer, as well. There is a greater likelihood of child abuse or neglect, marital breakdown, domestic violence, financial problems, and substance abuse.

There are many resources available to provide support, treatment, education and hope. Contact the National Council on Problem Gambling at (800) 522-4700 or the Mississippi Gamblers Anonymous hotline at (228) 864-0442 for more information.



“Hi Honey, I’m Home!” Tips for Making a Smooth Transition After Deployments

The homecoming of a deployed spouse can be a wonderfully joyous occasion with children rushing to the returning parent followed by the warm embrace and kiss of the reunited couple. Homecoming can also be an extremely frustrating and upsetting experience. For example, the date of return may change repeatedly or circumstances may not permit the spouse at home to meet the returning spouse. Deployments bring change. Knowing what to expect and how to deal with changes can make reunions more enjoyable and less stressful.

Typically, you can expect a “honeymoon” period following the reunion of the deployed spouse. However, after a few days the honeymoon period usually ends as the family tries to adjust to the return of the deployed spouse. The returning spouse will eventually want to reassert their role in the family, which can lead to tension. This may lead to a lost sense of independence for the other spouse. There is often resentment at having been left at home to care for the children, house, yard work, bills, etc. Spouses might find that they are more irritable with their mates at home. They may desire their “own space.” Basic household chores and routines need to be renegotiated, and the returning spouse’s role in the marriage must be reestablished. Sexual closeness may feel awkward at first, and can require time in order to reconnect emotionally. Sometimes the spouse returning may want to talk about what they saw and did, and others won’t want to talk at all. They may also miss the excitement of the deployment for a while. The key to a successful reunion is to go slowly in making adjustments and talk openly about problems. Take time to listen and to talk with your spouse. Try to make time to spend alone with your spouse so

you can reconnect with each other.

Reunion with children can also be a challenge. Their feelings tend to depend on their age and understanding of why the deployed person was gone. Babies less than one year may not know the returning person and may cry when held. Toddlers (1-3) may hide from the deployed person and be slow to come to that person. Preschoolers (3-5) may feel scared because of the separation. School aged children (6-12) may want a lot of attention and time from the returning person. Teenagers (13-18) may be moody and may appear not to care. It is important to go slowly and to adapt to the rules and routines that have been in place. Let the child set the pace for getting to know the returning person. Encourage the child to talk to you about their feelings about the separation.

Reunion can be both a joyous and challenging time. Avoid scheduling too many activities for your family during this time. Going slowly, lowering high expectations and taking time to get to know each other again are the keys to having a successful reunion. If you find the stress of the situation is too much, do not be afraid to reach out for help. Other military couples have reported that separation can be a good thing in their marriage. It gives the couple a chance to evaluate changes within themselves and what direction they want their marriage to take. Although deployment is difficult and stressful, many couples have reported that their relationship is much stronger as a result.

Helping Children Through these Difficult Times

Deployment often makes it necessary to change some aspects of family life, but when

children know what to expect, it helps them feel safer and more secure. During times of military conflict, news reports and images may be confusing and/or frightening to children. Here are a few ideas for helping your children.

Share information with your children:

Help your child find where the parent will be located on a world map.

When possible explain how long a parent will be away. Use a calendar or a paper chain of links to count down the weeks or months until the parent returns.

Answer questions openly and honestly.

Keep answers simple and use words your children can understand.

Show patience when your children ask the same questions over and over.

Show a positive attitude toward the mission of the deployed parent.

Encourage your children to talk about feelings.

Help them to express their feelings through words, play, drawings, etc.

Keep in mind each child has different concerns.

Talking about feelings will help to relieve their worries and will help you know what they need.

Reassure your children:

Reassure your children that you will help them manage while the parent is gone.

Tell your children that they and their home are safe and cared for. Let them know that their feelings (sadness, anger, loneliness, happiness, etc.) are important.

Offer your children comfort by holding them.

Be available whenever your children want to talk.

Remind them about all the adults (friends, teachers, child care

providers, other relatives) who are there to love them and help keep them safe.

Keep family routines and rituals. Children like and need routines. Keep family routines as normal as possible (bedtime stories, meal time chores, evening walks with the dog).

Remind your children that the same rules/limits apply while the parent is away.

Help your children to make a list of tasks they can do while the parent is away.

Limit TV watching:

Children can become stressed by seeing or hearing too much about military conflict in the news.

Be aware of what your children see and hear on TV and radio.

Watch TV with your children and talk with them about what they see.

Help children sort out what they hear and see. Let them know it is ok to talk about these issues.

Limit TV watching before bedtime. Remind your children that news reports often stress the most negative aspects of a military situation.

Realize that young children don't understand military conflicts the same way as adults:

Find out what you can about what your children know and talk to them about their feelings.

Answer their questions honestly,

using words they can understand. Don't try to give them all the information.

Follow your child's lead, answer questions as they come up.

Separation from a spouse or parent can lead to feelings of loneliness and isolation but it can also provide a chance for personal growth, as family members discover new sources of strength and support in themselves and others. Reunions can also bring joy as well as challenges. Be prepared for both. And remember, don't be afraid to seek professional help if you feel overwhelmed by your emotions or someone else in the family is having difficulties.

Safety Tips for Kids

Yell, Kick, & Scream - This may seem obvious, but many children freeze when they are frightened by an adult. Make sure they know that if they are scared, they won't get in trouble if they don't go along quietly. **Yell**- This person is hurting me! **Kick** - offender's foot, groin or knee. **Scream**.

Area Code & Phone Number - Make sure your child knows their area code and phone number. Does your child know how to make a collect call or dial in case of an emergency? Teach your child **not** to give their phone number or address to others without permission.

Buddy System - A child alone is an easy target. Encourage your children to use the buddy system and to watch out for each other.

Lure Tactics - *I have lost my puppy. Will you help me find him? I'll give you \$10 if you'll help me put this in the car.* Parents, teach your children how to respond--it is best to ignore them. Avoid any conversation and run.

Family Code Word - A code word is a lock and key for your child. For example, "*Your Mom and Dad have been in a car wreck. You need to come with me right now!*" Child: "*What is the code word?*"? If the adult doesn't know, then the child doesn't go. The child should run away from that person and tell whomever is responsible for them--teacher or parent--what happened. Get a description of the perpetrator if possible.

Separation Plan - Teach your children to go to a cashier or ticket booth if they are separated from you while at a mall, amusement park, or any place you travel.

Neighbors - Organize a block watch and participate in a safe home program.

Child's Clothes - Make a mental note of what your child wears every day! Also, do not put your child's name on the outside of their clothing because it allows others to easily identify your and address him/her directly.

Keeping Kids Safe: Why "Stranger Danger" *Doesn't* Work

By Paula Tracy, Family Advocacy Outreach Manager

Marketers know that the most effective strategy to ensure the public notices a new product is through the use of a clever slogan. Slogans are catchy, easy to remember, and oftentimes unforgettable. Who doesn't recognize the Nike "Just Do It" slogan?

One well known slogan many parents have heard is "Stranger Danger"—a strategy used to increase kids' awareness about personal safety. However, the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) has never supported the use of the extremely well-known slogan as a means to teach children about safety. First off, kids are more likely to be targeted by someone who is familiar to them, not a stranger. Second, when kids are asked to describe a stranger, they tend to use adjectives like "scary looking", "mean", and "bad". But what about those "nice", "friendly", and "helpful" strangers? Even adults can't discern the goodness in a person just by looking at him; how can we expect our kids to be able to?

Give it some deeper thought, and it becomes even more confusing. If an unfamiliar adult talks to a child, especially more than once, then that person may lose that "stranger" status. The child may feel that he now "knows" the adult. In addition, we usually raise our kids to be respectful and obedient in their interactions with adults. Add to that the inherent approval seeking of most children, and we increase the risk even more. So if an adult with malicious intent asks for help in solving a problem or informs a child that something bad has happened to a loved one, there exists a good chance that the child can be tricked.

The NCMEC recommends that parents focus on empowering their children with safety skills and positive messages, both of which can help them to feel more confident and capable if faced with a confusing situation. Kids already know the world can be a scary, unsafe place—television and newspapers remind them of that on a regular basis. They need to be told that there are good people in the world who will be there to help them if they are in trouble, such as a parent, guardian, or other trusted adult.



See, if we tell our kids to "never talk to strangers", we have inadvertently eliminated a huge pool of potential allies they could turn to if faced with a scary or doubtful situation.

If they become lost they are likely to be surrounded by "strangers" who could readily assist them if they ask for help. These people might be police officers, security guards, park rangers, store clerks, or other parents with their own children. Parents can educate their children to observe and identify adults who are in a position that symbolizes responsibility and authority. Kids need as much of a safety

net as we can possibly provide them.

We can't be with our children every minute of the day. It's impossible, and it's unhealthy for both parents and kids. So we must prepare them for possibly dangerous situations by encouraging awareness and problem-solving skills. Praise them whenever you observe them thinking on their feet to resolve an unusual situation. Model and practice critical thinking. Encourage them to pay attention to and heed their instincts, that funny feeling we get when "something just isn't quite right". Reassure them that it is okay to tell an adult "no" during those times, and to use it as an indicator to seek help. We need to teach kids safety in a non-threatening way that becomes a normal, familiar part of their lives. Practice "what if" scenarios in various locations, such as the mall, a park, or your very own neighborhood. Consider building a neighborhood network of parents who get together on a regular basis to discuss safety concerns or issues, and who agree to become surrogate eyes and ears to help neighborhood kids stay safe (remember those "Safe House" cards posted in the front windows of designated homes?). Establish a standing agreement with a trusted friend or neighbor that you will fill in for each other if one of you happens to be delayed coming home from work or errands.

Kids aren't the only ones who stand to benefit from that expanded safety net. As parents we can be so much more relaxed and positive when we know, with certainty, that we have each others' backs.

Family Advocacy is Proud to Present:



1-2-3 Magic*

Effective Discipline for Children 2-12

by Thomas W. Phelan, Ph.D.

Learn:

How to discipline without arguing, yelling, or spanking

How to control obnoxious behavior

How to handle the six kinds of testing and manipulation

Five tactics for encouraging good behavior

What to do about bedtime, messy rooms, lying, chores, homework, and more

How to strengthen your relationship with your child

Thomas W. Phelan, Ph.D. is the author of this internationally acclaimed program on child discipline, published by ParentMagic, Inc. Family Advocacy offers 1-2-3 Magic to help parents find solutions to the challenges of raising and disciplining children ages 2-12.

Next class: 24, 31 January, 7, 14 February from 1530-1730. Call 376-3457 for registration.

Friends for Life!!

An educational program for couples for who are thinking about getting married, already married, or considering divorce

♥ *Learn-*

How to identify high risk behaviors (that wreak havoc on a relationship)

Conflict management and resolution

How to state your needs to your partner in a calm, non-threatening manner

The value of forgiveness

How to be an active, respectful listener

Effective ways to problem solve

Much, much more!!

Registration required!

Call 376-3457 to register!





Make Everyday Valentine's Day

February 14th is typically the day we think of romance with our "special someone." But why wait for a special occasion to express your love? Here are some little ways to nurture your loving relationship everyday.

Say "I Love You" at least once everyday. We all need to hear these words often.

Kiss hello and good-bye. Hugs are nice too.

"Date" your partner for the rest of your lives.

Don't sweat the small stuff.

Focus on the positive things about your partner.

Don't try to talk when either of you are angry.

Think of your partner first.

Spend time just being together everyday.



K
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Valentine Word Scramble

Unscramble the following words:

TAVELNIEN

REHTA

UDIPC

ELVO

ADNYC

RPYTA



LOOKING AHEAD



In our next issue...

- Child Abuse Prevention Month
- Summer Safety
- The kids are out of school....now what?
- Getting There From Here – A Relationship Roadmap

